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Understanding Us: An Interactive Training Program for Members of Law Enforcement and Individuals with Disabilities

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Understanding Us: An Interactive Training Program for Members of Law Enforcement
and Individuals with Disabilities

by

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A Scholarly Project

Submitted to the Occupational Therapy Department of the

University of North Dakota

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Occupational Therapy

Grand Forks, North Dakota

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This scholarly project, submitted by Alisha Roberts, MOTS and Myah Satterelli, MOTS in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Occupational Therapy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisor under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

Nicole Haupt
Faculty Advisor

4-6-2020
Date

PERMISSION

Title: Understanding Us: An Interactive Training Program for Members of Law Enforcement and Individuals with Disabilities

Department: Occupational Therapy

Degree: Master of Occupational Therapy

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04-07-2020

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ABSTRACT

Title: Understanding Us: An Interactive Training Program for Individuals with Disabilities and Members of Law Enforcement

Background: It has been found that individuals who have disabilities such as developmental disabilities (DD), intellectual disabilities (ID), and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are more likely to have interactions with members of law enforcement and the criminal justice system (Gendle & Woodhams, 2005; Henshaw & Thomas, 2012; Rava, Shattuck, Rast, & Roux, 2017; Spaan, & Kaal, 2019). It has also been suggested that symptoms of such disabilities can influence the ways in which law enforcement engage and interact with these individuals (Gardner, Campbell, & Westdal, 2018). Lack of knowledge, insufficient training, personal experiences, and barriers to communication have been identified as the common themes that affect the interactions between individuals with disabilities and members of law enforcement.

Purpose: The purpose of this scholarly project was to develop an interactive training program for individuals with disabilities and members of law enforcement. The program is grounded in occupational therapy theory to allow the two populations to improve interactions with one another.

Methods: The program developers conducted a review of literature looking specifically at ASD, ID, DD, law enforcement, criminal justice, and training that is provided to members of such populations. Through the literature review, gaps were identified in current literature and training including a lack of research from the United States, outdated research, and trainings that do not address both populations. Next, the role of occupational therapy in addressing the problem was identified using the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2014). Finally, an interactive training program consisting of three, two-hour sessions was developed.

Conclusions: The training program titled Understanding Us: An Interactive Training Program for Individuals with Disabilities and Members of Law Enforcement was designed to be implemented by occupational therapy practitioners and occupational therapy students to foster more positive interactions between individuals with disabilities and members of law enforcement.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Following the deinstitutionalization movement and the associated healthcare reforms, there has been a focus on treatment for people with mental health and intellectual disabilities being primarily in the community, which has consequently resulted in police increasingly encountering people with a diverse array of vulnerabilities and needs (Spivak & Thomas, 2013). An intellectual disability (ID) is defined as problems with general mental abilities that affect functioning in two areas; intellectual functioning such as learning, judgment, and problem solving, and adaptive functioning such as activities of daily living, including communication and independent living (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2019a). An intellectual disability is encompassing of cognitive disabilities and developmental disabilities (DD). A learning disability, or specific learning disorder, is characterized by problems in one of three areas; reading, writing, and math, which are foundational to one's ability to learn (APA, 2019b). Autism Spectrum disorder (ASD) is a complex developmental condition that involves persistent challenges in social interaction, speech and nonverbal communication, and restricted/repetitive behaviors (APA, 2019c). Through a thorough review of literature and existing research, a need was identified in improving education, training, and interactions between members of law enforcement and individuals with disabilities.

It has frequently been cited that individuals with disabilities such as DD, ID, and ASD are more likely to have interactions with members of law enforcement and the

criminal justice system (Gendle & Woodhams, 2005; Henshaw & Thomas, 2012; Rava, Shattuck, Rast, & Roux, 2017; Spaan, & Kaal, 2019). Additionally, it has been suggested that symptoms of such disabilities can influence the ways in which law enforcement engage and interact with these individuals (Gardner, Campbell, & Westdal, 2018). Police officers often find themselves having a difficult time identifying if someone has a disability, including ASD and ID, and commonly rely on physical/ behavioral characteristics, or previously recorded information, but are sometimes unable to identify a disability (Henshaw & Thomas, 2012; Salerno & Schuller, 2014; Spivak & Thomas, 2013). An improved mutual understanding between these two populations is needed in order for law enforcement officers to effectively serve all members of society, including those who have disabilities. Additionally, individuals with disabilities can improve their ability to participate in their communities if they possess skills and confidence to advocate for themselves when interacting with members of law enforcement.

A solution to address this discrepancy is an interactive training program designed for members of law enforcement and individuals with disabilities. The profession of occupational therapy is best suited to address this issue because occupational therapists are skilled in activity analysis and improving performance in occupations such as social skills and interacting with others. Occupational therapy aims to assist individuals to participate in daily activities that they want and need to do in order to enhance performance in occupations across the lifespan. Occupational therapy practitioners possess the skills and training needed to foster interactions between these two populations with interventions that are based on theories and frames of reference. According to the American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA] (2009), fostering community

integration for individuals with ID supports the Association's commitment to inclusion and non-discrimination of all people. The profession of occupational therapy strives to enable participation in society. Occupational therapists are educated and trained to understand the dynamic interactions between an individual and the environment, making them vital professionals to encourage community integration (Ideishi, D'Amico, Jirkowic, 2013).

The focus of this program is to help facilitate successful interactions between individuals with disabilities and members of law enforcement with an emphasis on communication management and mutual understanding. According to the *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process 3rd edition* (OTPF), communication management, social participation within the community, and education are all areas of occupation that are within the scope of occupational therapy practice (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2014) and therefore makes this program appropriate to be implemented by an occupational therapy practitioner.

The training program incorporates team-building exercises, shared experiences, and facilitation of new interactions between the two populations to foster growth and understanding. The program is guided by the Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) Model. The four key domains of PEO are person, environment, occupation, and occupational performance (Baptiste, 2017). The person is made up of the physical self, cognitive and affective self, and spiritual self. In the PEO Model, the person is seen as a being who can assume many roles at the same time and who can engage in activities and occupations that are needed and desired (Baptiste, 2017). The environment is everything that surrounds the person including physical, social, cultural, and institutional

components. Occupation has many different definitions depending on the person but is seen as being made up of activities and tasks. Occupational performance is considered the overarching endpoint of the transactions and relationships between the person, environment, and occupation (Baptiste, 2017).

The PEO Model guides each session by incorporating flexible, fluid interventions that address interactions between the person, environment, and occupation. This model served as a guide when developing sessions that allow members of law enforcement and individuals with disabilities to expand their knowledge and understanding of one another in a safe, structured environment. The PEO Model is effective for this training program as it allows for better transactions between the person's unique qualities, the environments they encounter, and the occupations they pursue. Anticipated outcomes for this program are improved interactions between the two populations in real life situations and improving training that can be implemented to participants in the future. Chapter two includes a review of literature to further illustrate the need for this program and introduce emerging themes.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review was to explore existing research on interactions between members of law enforcement and individuals with disabilities and demonstrate the need for this scholarly project. Articles have been published on individuals with disabilities' perceptions of police officers and vice versa, but the majority of these are from other countries and there is a lack of current articles and research regarding this topic in the United States. Articles were pulled and reviewed that included interactions with law enforcement and the criminal justice system involving individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), intellectual or developmental disabilities (ID or DD), learning disabilities (LD), and cognitive disabilities.

The core symptoms associated with ASD include impairments in social interaction and communication, and the presence of restricted and repetitive behavior (Teagardin, Dixon, Smith, & Granpeesheh, 2012). An intellectual disability is defined as problems with general mental abilities that affect functioning in two areas; intellectual functioning such as learning, judgement and problem solving and adaptive functioning such as activities of daily living including communication and independent living (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2019a). An intellectual disability is encompassing of cognitive disabilities and developmental disabilities. A learning disability, or specific learning disorder, is characterized by problems in one of three areas; reading, writing, and math, which are foundational to one's ability to learn (APA,

2019b). Individuals with disabilities often do not present in a typical way to law enforcement, which can lead to misjudgments (Modell & Cropp, 2007). Through the literature review, it was found that due to a lack of knowledge, insufficient training, personal experiences, barriers to communication, and gaps in recent literature in the United States (U.S.) members of law enforcement and individuals with disabilities may not have successful interactions with one another. It is essential that there be an interactive training program that educates both parties and allows for shared perception and development of greater awareness. Occupational therapy (OT) can aid in the client-centered training and education that is needed for these two populations to develop an improved understanding of one another.

Problem Description

Lack of Knowledge

A mutual lack of knowledge about members of law enforcement and individuals with disabilities may affect successful interactions between the two due to decreased confidence and competence. Hayes (2007) found that there is not a standard procedure to assist members of law enforcement in being able to correctly identify when someone has a LD. It was stated that most police officers use their own methods, including screening tools and questionnaires (Hayes, 2007). It was found that many LDs may go unrecognized by the criminal justice system or misdiagnosed (Hayes, 2007). Hyun, Hahn, and McConnell (2013) state that individuals with LDs may be more likely to commit a crime due to chronically poor life conditions and/or negative peer influence.

Additionally, according to a study by Salerno and Schuller (2014), of 35 respondents who

had experienced an encounter with police, none reported that the officer was able to identify that they had a disability on their own.

Individuals who enter the criminal justice system tend to have fewer supports, lower socioeconomic status, and lower rates of education and employment than the general population (Hyun, Hahn, & McConnell). Police officers responding to a study by Spaan and Kaal (2019), reported having a lack of knowledge and understanding about mild intellectual disabilities (MIDs), how to identify individuals with a MID, and the consequences of living with a MID. A lack of knowledge and understanding of individuals with disabilities, their communication styles, and behaviors result in misjudgments by members of law enforcement (Spaan & Kaal, 2019). According to Henshaw and Thomas (2012), individuals with IDs can be more vulnerable to criminal activity because they are less likely to identify social cues indicating danger, more likely to place misguided trust in others, act compliantly in the wrong situations, and be perceived as easy targets. Miscommunication is also common once an individual with disabilities enters the criminal justice system and can hinder access to legal support and supportive rehabilitation (Chester, 2018). Chester (2018) states that individuals with disabilities may not always understand verbal or written information provided to them regarding their rights while in police custody. Suspects with intellectual disabilities are disadvantaged if they are interviewed by the police because they may “without knowing or wishing to do so, be particularly prone in certain circumstances to provide information which is unreliable, misleading, or self-incriminating” (Chester, 2018, p. 151).

Insufficient Training

Training in some areas is available to both individuals with disabilities and members of law enforcement on effective interactions and identifications of one another but has been observed to be outdated, insufficient, and not implemented consistently (Bailey, Barr, & Bunting, 2001; Crane, Maras, Hawken, Mulcahy, & Memon, 2016; Ellem & Richards, 2018; Gendle & Woodhams, 2005; Henshaw & Thomas, 2012). Effective strategies have been implemented to help individuals with cognitive disabilities navigate the criminal justice system, however, if they are not mandatory, they often are not used (Ellem & Richards, 2018). A survey conducted by Crane et al., (2016), found that police officers have reported frustration with insufficient training about individuals with ASD, information, and organizational support. Only 37% of the 242 officers who participated said they had received any sort of training on ASD, and of that, only 13% received any sort of refresher training. Henshaw and Thomas (2012) illustrate how police training for individuals with intellectual disabilities is rare or nonexistent in some areas of Australia, with a need for specialized training in communication and identification of behaviors common with individuals who have an ID.

Compton et al. (2014) examined law enforcement officers' encounters and levels of force used with individuals who were suspected to have a mental illness, a drug or alcohol problem or developmental disability. They looked at the effect of a crisis intervention team (CIT) on seven levels of force and three dispositions. The CIT training is a 40-hour training that provides knowledge and techniques essential to identify signs and symptoms of mental illnesses, de-escalating crisis situations, and making appropriate dispositions. It was found that the CIT training did not have a prominent effect on

officers' use of force, however, CIT-trained officers were more likely to refer subjects to services or transfer them to a treatment facility and less likely to arrest them (Compton et al., 2014).

According to a survey conducted by Gardner, Campbell, and Westdal (2018), a majority of the 72 law enforcement officers (LEOs) participating reported that they had some type of prior relationship with an individual who has ASD, and half reported that they had responded to a call involving an individual with ASD within the last 12 months. Over three-quarters of the LEOs had not completed training related to interacting with individuals with ASD (Gardner, Campbell, & Westdal, 2018). Of the participants in the survey, those who had received training were more likely to report they felt adequately prepared to respond to the call than those who had not received training (Garnder, Campbell, & Westdal, 2018). However, all of the LEOs who responded to this survey were equally likely to use physical force, use handcuffs, and have the call end in evaluation for involuntary hospitalization (Gardner, Campbell, & Westdal, 2018).

In a randomized, waitlist-controlled, between-groups design study conducted by Teagardin, Dixon, Smith, and Granpeesheh (2012), half of the 42 law enforcement officers who participated were assigned to the training group and half to the control group. The officers in the training group viewed an educational video designed to teach law enforcement officers about ASD, how to recognize a person with ASD, and how to respond to persons with ASD (Teagardin et al., 2012). Upon completion of this study, it was found that the training group performed considerably better than the control group at posttest. However, even with training, officers scored fairly low on the posttest. This could describe that video training alone may not be sufficient, and that adjunctive training

is required. Traditional in-person training may better facilitate learning as compared to video training alone, and the training may have been too short (Teagardin et al., 2012).

Gendle and Woodhams (2005) determined in a 1997 study that many professionals working in the criminal justice system did not know what a learning disability was or what it would mean for a person who has one. In that same study, 35% of 285 police officers who were surveyed reported having training about learning disabilities and of those, only 26% felt that their training was adequate. Gendle and Woodhams (2005) conducted a follow-up study to determine the perceptions of police officers in the UK towards individuals who have a learning disability and their knowledge of issues related to learning disabilities. A theme regarding training emerged during their data analysis with officers stating a need for more practical training and refresher training courses (Gendle & Woodhams, 2005). They expressed concern that the current training was too heavily based on theory and did not provide them with practical help on how to interact with individuals with LDs (Gendle & Woodhams, 2005).

Hayes (2007) states that the need for training extends beyond members of law enforcement and includes probation and parole staff, court staff, custodial staff, and the magistracy and judiciary. Individuals with disabilities may require more personalized programs and plans of care than someone who does not have a disability. Also, there is a need for services to be offered to individuals with learning disabilities that are supporting and accommodating to ensure successful implementation of action for those who have learning disabilities (Hayes, 2007). The research indicated that people with LDs are missing out on services which may prevent the development of offending behavior or

which address behaviors at early stages (Hayes, 2007). As a result, they are being over represented in the criminal justice system.

Personal Experiences

Personal experiences between law enforcement and individuals with disabilities have the ability to dictate the way one views the entire population. According to Modell and Cropp (2007), police officers associate individuals who have disabilities with individuals who have a mental illness; often perceiving them as dangerous, violent, and having unpredictable behavior. The way individuals with disabilities perceive law enforcement relies heavily on experiences they have had. Negative experiences with police officers and the criminal justice system may have an influence on their attitudes and behaviors towards authority, and many in turn act as a deterrent to cooperate and report acts of victimization (Ellem & Richard, 2018). However, if individuals with disabilities are exposed to law enforcement in a positive way, receive supportive education, and are reassured, they are more likely to trust law enforcement and have better outcomes and positive experiences.

Of 35 respondents who participated in a survey by Salerno and Schuller (2014), 80% reported that they had experienced at least one interaction with police in their lifetime (Salerno & Schuller 2014). Interactions most frequently started from police being called as a result of the respondent's actions (Salerno & Schuller, 2014). Respondents also reported experiencing victimization and force used by police (Salerno & Schuller, 2014). About one-third of respondents reported that they tried to tell the officer they had a disability at some point during the interaction (Salerno & Schuller, 2014). A quarter

indicated that the officer was aware they had a disability because someone else made them aware or because they told the officer themselves (Salerno & Schuller 2014). While officers were unable to identify the disability on their own, most respondents reported that disclosing their disability helped the police officer understand their behavior and the situation (Salerno & Schuller 2014). The majority of respondents reported feeling afraid or scared, uncomfortable, cautious, and anxious during their interactions, and some described their interaction as traumatic (Salerno, & Schuller 2014).

In a Canadian study describing rates of emergency service use and satisfaction with care received in the emergency department and/or interactions with police, 40 individuals with ASD reported an overall median satisfaction with police service (Tint, Paluka, Bradley, Weiss, & Lunskey, 2019). However, it was found that police involvement increased agitation during seven incidents, had no effect in five incidents, and had a calming effect in four incidents (Tint et al., 2019). According to Krishan et al. (2014), encounters between members of law enforcement and those who are suspected to have a mental illness, addictive disorder, or DD that involved referral or transport to services were found to be marginally more likely to occur in immigrant neighborhoods. However, neighborhood characteristics did not appear to have an effect on the likelihood of referral to services or transport to a treatment facility, arrest, or use of force (Krishan et al., 2014).

Helverschou, Steindal, Nottestad, and Howlin (2017) conducted a follow up study from a 2015 study that aimed to discover personal experiences faced in the criminal justice system by those who have ASD. All 48 participants from the 2015 study were offenders with a diagnosis of ASD who had undergone a forensic psychiatric examination

in Norway between 2000 and 2010. Nine of the 48 chose to participate. The results displayed that six out of eight participants understood why the police were called on them, and that they had been treated well, two stated that they panicked and fought with the police, and one stated that his ASD diagnosis was not taken into account.

Barriers to Communication

Barriers to communication may affect successful interactions if law enforcement officers are not knowledgeable in the specific needs of individuals who may have a disability and require alternative means or style of communicating. Individuals with disabilities are often told what to do during encounters with the police which heightens emotions and does not allow for the individual to tell their story (Ellem & Richards, 2018). Additionally, individuals with disabilities often do not understand the consequences of their actions in instances such as calling 911 or reporting crimes (Spaan & Kaal, 2019). The common cognitive characteristics of ASD and other IDs may interfere with the individuals' ability to fully understand the consequences of breaking the law, which could lead to illegal behaviors (Cheely et al., 2011).

According to Spivak and Thomas (2013), many jurisdictions have instituted programs which require the presence of an "appropriate adult" during police interviews with vulnerable populations. The role of an appropriate adult may be fulfilled by a friend or relative of the individual being interviewed but may also be fulfilled by a volunteer (Spivak & Thomas, 2013). In the state of Victoria Australia, these volunteers are referred to as Independent Third Person (ITPs) and are trained to perform the role for adults whom police believe or know have a cognitive impairment and are being questioned as witnesses, suspects, or victims (Spivak & Thomas, 2013). The ITPs have the role of

facilitating communication between police and the individual being interviewed, ensure the individual understands their rights, and provides emotional support to the individual (Spivak & Thomas, 2013). Additionally, the ITP may suggest the police seek a medical assessment to determine if it is appropriate for the individual to be interviewed, and may request to speak with the interviewee before the police interview to build rapport and calm the interviewee (Spivak & Thomas, 2013).

A survey conducted by Spivak and Thomas (2013) was completed by ITPs and revealed positive satisfaction rating with regard to how police treated them and individuals with IDs. However, ratings of how police treated ITPs were significantly higher than police treatment of individuals with ID (Spivak & Thomas, 2013).

Additionally, ITPs generally perceived the police as being competent in dealing with individuals with ID, but more competent at communicating with ITPs (Spivak & Thomas, 2013). According to the ITPs, police most commonly identified ID on the basis of previously recorded information from the Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) police contacts database, and less frequently based on appearance, inappropriate behavior and contacting disability services (Spivak & Thomas, 2013). Training needs that were most commonly reported by ITPs focused on procedural aspects of their role such as information on protocols and how to identify ID, while others suggested more training around empathic communicative aspects of their roles (Spivak & Thomas, 2013).

Henshaw, Spivak, and Thomas (2016) refer to these volunteers as independent support persons. They conducted a study to determine the experiences and perceptions of police officers have had of an independent support person during police interviews with those who have IDs. Their findings demonstrated that independent support persons are

commonly family members, friends, social workers, or volunteers. They found that police utilization of independent support persons in interviews with people with ID was very high, and the police showed an understanding of the role and function of the support person in the interview process (Henshaw, Spivak, & Thomas, 2016). However, it was also found that police continue to face challenges when interacting with the support person, despite having identified that they may be working with someone who has an ID (Henshaw, Spivak, & Thomas, 2016). Additionally, Chester (2018) refers to these adults as adult safeguards or appropriate persons, who are appointed to an individual who has been deemed unfit to independently represent themselves. While many names exist for these supportive adults, they all serve the same purpose in supporting the individual with disabilities and could benefit from training to ensure their competence and role in representing the individuals.

Strategies and Effective Solutions

A solution to address the problems identified with these populations includes an interactive in-service training course for members of law enforcement and individuals with disabilities to promote a shared awareness, and increased interactions between both populations. According to Bailey, Barr, and Bunting (2001), interactive role-play activities between members of law enforcement and individuals with IDs in a facilitated setting may help them to develop positive attitudes towards one another. It is suggested that traditional in-person training may better facilitate learning than means such as video training (Teagardin et al., 2012). The program will be designed for members of law enforcement, specifically police officers, and individuals who have an intellectual disability, developmental disability, learning disability, or Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The program will target law enforcement officers as well as individuals with disabilities at group homes, adult day programs, and transitional education programs. While this program is not targeting caregivers or supportive adults, these individuals are encouraged to attend the sessions as observers for comfort for individuals with disabilities and for an opportunity to expand their own knowledge and understanding of these two populations. Strategies used to implement this program include sharing of information, role play activities, team building activities, and debriefing sessions. Aspects of adult learning, or andragogy, and aspects of childhood learning, or pedagogy will be used throughout the program. Andragogy will be used as learners will be actively participating in the learning process (Bastable & Dart, 2011). Learners will also be learning in a group setting and sessions will be person and problem centered with the goal of improving interactions (Bastable & Dart, 2011). Pedagogy will be used as sessions will be implemented close together so participants can remember what they learned from one session to the next (Bastable & Dart, 2011). According to Bastable and Dart (2011), role-play activities are helpful to allow pedagogical learners to relate simulate scenarios to real-life situations. These strategies will be guided in occupational therapy by the Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) Model.

The four key domains of PEO are person, environment, occupation, and occupational performance (Baptiste, 2017). The PEO Model will shape each session by incorporating flexible, fluid interventions that address interactions between the person, environment, and occupation. Cole's Seven Steps will serve as the guide for developing client-centered sessions and objectives that are directed by the PEO model. The unique occupational therapy design of this program and the use of Cole's Seven Steps will allow

for transferability and further implementation of this program by occupational therapy practitioners. Occupational therapy interventions guided by the PEO model will create a unique, client-centered approach to develop meaningful interactions between individuals with disabilities and members of law enforcement. “Occupational therapists can provide sensitivity training to public service providers such as local police, fire, and emergency medical personnel on strategies for engaging and communicating with people of different abilities” (Ideishi, Amico, & Jirikowic, p. 2, 2013). There has been a recent push for more community-based OT services. According to the American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA] (2009), fostering community integration for individuals with ID supports the Association’s commitment to inclusion and non-discrimination of all people. Additionally, occupational therapists are educated and trained in understanding the dynamic interactions between an individual and the environment, making them vital professionals to encourage community integration (Ideishi, D’Amico, Jirkowic, 2013). This program would target tier two and three populations in the community as it will involve individuals who have a disability and officers who are likely to encounter individuals with disabilities.

The interactive nature of the program will promote learning and understanding while working to decrease stigma, stereotypes, and fear. According to Bailey et al. (2001) awareness training exercises and discussions assist participants (police officers) in recognizing their own attitudes and stigmas they place on people who have intellectual disabilities, and the impact that such views have on the rights of people with intellectual disabilities. Modell and Cropp (2007) suggest that training that involves presentations, in-service trainings, and interactions with individuals who have disabilities could effectively

address attitudes and perceptions and lead to better understanding of individuals with disabilities, less apprehension and fear, safer law enforcement responses and better outcomes. The program may alleviate stress and anxiety that can be faced by those who have disabilities when interacting with members of law enforcement. Upon completion of this course, individuals with disabilities should feel comfortable disclosing that they have a disability and need additional support.

Summary

Due to a lack of knowledge, insufficient training, personal experiences, and barriers to communication, members of law enforcement and individuals with disabilities may not have successful interactions with one another. Through the review of literature on this topic, it was discovered that a majority of the articles and existing research came from sources outside of the United States. This highlights the lack of effective programs in the U.S., indicating there is a need for an interactive training program for law enforcement and individuals with disabilities. This interactive program will help to foster awareness, promote understanding, and strengthen meaningful interactions between these two groups of people. As a client-centered and occupation-based profession, occupational therapy can help members of law enforcement place more focus on the individual needs of those with disabilities and allow those with disabilities to gain confidence and awareness of the roles of law enforcement. In the next chapter, information gathered from the literature review will be used to create a description of the process used to design the product. This includes session outlines, methodology, and a specific plan of implementation.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The authors of this scholarly project have a special interest in this topic due to having family members with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Through the experiences of these family members, the authors have noticed differences in the ways individuals with disabilities perceive and interact with members of law enforcement. The authors have also seen several examples of poor interactions between the populations portrayed through different media outlets. Both authors are passionate about this topic and hope to use this scholarly project as a way to continue advocating for individuals with disabilities across the lifespan.

To further determine the need for this scholarly project, an extensive review of literature and research was conducted. Peer-reviewed journal articles and databases such as PubMed, CINAHL, and Google Scholar were used to obtain relevant literature and research. Once the problem and need were defined, which included a gap in the literature, a training program was developed to address the needs of both populations. This program was created to address the problem of inadequate training for law enforcement officers and individuals with disabilities on how to interact and engage with one another. Methods that had supporting evidence based on the literature review were incorporated into the training program. When developing the intervention sessions, Cole's Seven Steps were followed to ensure ease of implementation for any occupational therapy practitioner.

Cole's Seven Steps include: introduction, activity, sharing, processing, generalizing, application, and summary (Cole, 2012). Following Cole's Seven Steps allows for participants to actively engage in a learning activity and process what they learned with group members. The goal of implementing these steps into the program is that participants will be able to generalize and share what they have learned and apply it to their lives and future interactions (Cole, 2012). Cole's Seven Steps are effective during the development of occupational therapy interventions due to their client-centered nature and component of activity analysis and active client learning,

The Person, Environment, Occupation Model (PEO) was also used throughout this scholarly project. The PEO Model is incorporated in each session by using flexible, fluid interventions that address interactions between the person, environment, and occupation and how these domains impact occupational performance. This model served as a guide when developing sessions that allow members of law enforcement and individuals with disabilities to expand their knowledge and understanding of one another in a safe, structured environment.

Based on the findings of the literature review a gap was identified in occupational therapy-based research on interventions for members of law enforcement and how to appropriately and productively respond to individuals with disabilities. Additionally, a need was identified for more occupational therapy-based interventions that help individuals with disabilities prepare for interactions with members of law enforcement. The unique occupational therapy design of this program and the use of Cole's Seven Steps allows for transferability and further implementation of this program by occupational therapy practitioners.

To gain an understanding of the prior knowledge and perceptions of the participants, an initial survey will be administered to both populations at the beginning of the first session. The participants will also complete a pretest/posttest survey to help determine the knowledge and confidence gained. Upon completion of the program, participants will also be asked to complete a satisfaction survey to help determine the success of the training program. The feedback received from the surveys will be used to modify and adapt the program for future implementation and program development.

The intervention sessions will be provided in a group setting across three consecutive days for one week. Each session will be two hours long with a set of objectives based on the needs identified throughout the literature review. An occupational therapy practitioner will act as the group leader and facilitator, following Cole's Seven Steps to encourage consistent active engagement. The following chapter will include a brief description of the product as well as the manual and materials for occupational therapy practitioner implementation.

CHAPTER FOUR

Product

Understanding Us: An Interactive Training
Program for Members of Law Enforcement and
Individuals with Disabilities

Alisha Roberts, MOTS

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Advisor: Nicole Harris EdD, OTR/L

Session 1:
What I Want You to Know About Me

Session 1: What I Want You to Know About Me

Understanding Us organizes each session outline using Cole's Seven Steps for ease of implementation. The PEO model and the *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework* (OTPF) will be used to guide each session.

Group Description: This is a series of three, two-hour sessions, once a day for three days designed to improve interactions between individuals with disabilities and members of law enforcement. The number of participants will be dependent on the interest in the group and willingness to participate however, groups will not exceed 8 participants. This group will help participants increase their knowledge about one another, improve interactions, increase confidence in identifying one another, and foster positive experiences between the two populations.

Room Arrangement: The group will be held in a community space. The room will be set up in a circle formation so that all members are able to see the leader, as well as the other group members. The papers and writing utensils used for the survey, warm up, and main activity will be passed out to participants prior to the start of each activity. Supplemental handouts will be given to participants at the end of the session.

Required Items: Initial and Pretest/Posttest surveys for each population, writing utensils, and name tags.

Prior to this Session: Print the surveys; "Initial Survey for Individuals with Disabilities", "Initial Survey for Law Enforcement", "Pretest/Posttest for Individuals with Disabilities", and "Pretest/Posttest for Law Enforcement" (located at the end of session). Write pair items on name tags and arrange the room.

OTPF Areas of Occupation: Social Participation (community), and Education

1. Introduction:

Potential prompt for introduction:

"Welcome to the first of the three sessions of Understanding Us: An Interactive Training Program for Individuals with Disabilities and Members of Law Enforcement! Today's session is titled "What I Want You to Know About Me". We will start by taking two surveys. These surveys will help us understand what you already know about each other, and help us structure the session to better suit your needs. You will be given 5 minutes to complete the surveys, if you have questions or need help, please let us know. Once the surveys are completed, we will start our warm-up activity and get to know each other, which will take approximately 15 minutes. After the warm-up activity, we will begin our team activity. Afterwards we will engage in discussion and processing."

Objectives:

1. By the end of this session, group members will gain knowledge of the *Understanding Us* program.
2. By the end of this session, group members will be able to independently identify one new thing they learned about law enforcement officers or individuals with disabilities.

“Any Questions?”

Expectations: The facilitator(s) will state to the group that the expectations of the session are for all group members to participate in the warm-up, the activity, and the sharing sections of the group session as they feel comfortable. All group members will be asked to be mindful of ideas and experiences shared and to respect one another as well as the facilitator(s).

Timeframe:

- Introduction of session: 5 minutes
- Surveys: 5 minutes
- Warm-up activity: 10 minutes
- Activity: 60 minutes
- Break: 10 minutes
- Sharing/Processing/Generalizing: 25 mins
- Overview of next session: 5 minutes
 - Total time: 2 hours

Warm-up: Find your Pair

Each participant will be given a name tag that is labeled with an item that is generally paired with another item. For example, “salt” would be paired with “pepper” or “peanut butter” and “jelly”. The paired item names will be distributed so that each participant will be paired with a member of the opposite population (see pair example handouts at the end of the session). The group will be asked to stand up and find their partner based on the pairing of their name tags. Once each participant finds their partner, or partners if there is an uneven number, they will introduce themselves and take a seat next to each other in the circle. Once all pairs have been located and all participants have returned to the circle, each pair will introduce their partner to the group and share what their “paired name tags” were. Once each participant has been introduced by their partner, the facilitator(s) will introduce the *What I Want You to Know About Me* activity.

2. Activity: What I Want You to Know About Me

Participants will split into their two populations and will be given 10 minutes to discuss what they think is the most important information to share with the other population. After the discussion, participants will return to their seats in the circle next to their partners from the warm-up activity. Each population will then have 20 minutes to share and 10 minutes to complete the question and answer session.

Individuals with disabilities will have the opportunity to share first. Each participant will have the opportunity to describe things about them/their diagnosis they feel law enforcement should know. This could include their unique qualities, characteristics, and behaviors. The group facilitator(s) may reference responses from the surveys taken at the beginning of the session to prompt discussion amongst the populations, especially if the individuals with disabilities are reluctant or nervous to share. Once the individuals with disabilities have shared, a question and answer session will be opened, allowing the participants to talk to one another and discuss their similarities and differences.

Next, the members of law enforcement will take turns describing what they want individuals with disabilities to know about them and their job. Once they have shared, a question and answer session will be opened up, allowing individuals with disabilities to ask questions.

3. Sharing:

Possible sharing questions:

“What did you like about this activity? What do you think could change? What was your favorite part of the activity?”

4. Processing:

Possible processing questions:

What was the most difficult part of this activity? How did it feel to share in front of others? Do you feel like you learned something about the other group? What did you learn?

5. Generalizing:

Facilitator(s) points out similarities and/or differences that were observed between the two populations. Ask the group if there is anything they noticed that was similar or different. Facilitator(s) share with the group, *“Today we were able to share important things about ourselves that can improve interactions with each other. Is there anything else you learned today?”*

6. Application:

Prompt:

“This group session provided you with the information to hopefully better understand each other and needs you may have. What you have learned today that can make interactions more enjoyable for everyone involved?”

7. Summary:

Facilitator(s) restate the objectives from the beginning of the session:

1. By the end of this session, group members will be introduced to one another and gain knowledge of the *Understanding Us* program.
2. By the end of this session, group members will be able to independently identify one new thing they learned about law enforcement officers or individuals with disabilities.

"Today we were able to learn about each other. We hope that this session has helped you become more comfortable with one another as we prepare for the next session titled "Team-Building and Role-Play Workshop", where you will be interacting and working together to reach a goal! Thank you all for participating!"

Rationale

Activity Demand:

Meaning: This group session was chosen because it will provide both populations with the opportunity to get to know each other in a safe and neutral environment. Also, the activity will allow for each population to share about themselves and learn about the other. This training session will allow for interactions between each population which has been identified as a helpful training strategy (Bailey, Barr, & Bunting, 2001; Teagardin et al., 2012). According to Bailey et al. (2001), interactive role-play activities between members of law enforcement and individuals with intellectual disabilities in a facilitated setting may help them to develop positive attitudes towards one another. Further, it is suggested that traditional in-person training may better facilitate learning than means such as video training (Teagardin et al., 2012).

Performance Skills/Client Factor: In this session, members will be able to gain knowledge of the *Understanding Us* program (objective 1) and identify one new thing they learned about the other population (objective 2). Objective 1 is achieved when members have been educated on the purpose and structure of the program. An understanding of objective 2 will be demonstrated through discussion during the sharing and processing steps of the session.

Complexity/Sequencing/Timing: The activity chosen is appropriate for this group because it allows each participant to participate at their current level of functioning and does not require a high level of physical movement or high cognitive demands. Participants will be asked to follow simple directions, and comprehend the information given to them to the best of their ability. These populations also have the ability to take turns and sequence the activity. It is anticipated that both populations have the ability to attend for the duration of the activity and will be given a break and additional time for processing or movement throughout the room if needed.

Initial Survey for Individuals with Disabilities

1. Have you ever interacted with a police officer? **Yes or No**

a. If you have interacted with a police officer, was it a pleasant experience?

Yes or No

b. Why or why not?

2. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very bad and 5 being excellent, rate your experience interacting with a police officer:

1

2

3

4

5

3. Have you ever received training related to interacting with police officers?

Yes or No

a. If so, what kind?

4. What do you hope to gain from this training?

Pretest/Posttest Survey for Individuals with Disabilities

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not comfortable at all, and 5 being very comfortable, how comfortable do you feel around police officers?

1 2 3 4 5

2. How comfortable do you feel telling a police officer that you have a disability?

1 2 3 4 5

3. How much do you know about what members of law enforcement do? With 1 being nothing and 5 being a lot.

1 2 3 4 5

Initial Survey for Law Enforcement

1. Have you ever interacted with an individual with a disability? **Yes or No**

a. If you have interacted with an individual with a disability, was it a pleasant experience?

Yes or No

2. If you have interacted with an individual with a disability, on a scale of 1 to 5, rate your experience interacting with an individual with a disability:

1

2

3

4

5

3. Have you ever received training related to interacting with individuals with individuals with disabilities?

Yes or No

a. If yes, what kind?

b. If yes, do you feel that your training has helped prepare you for encountering individuals with disabilities?

Yes or No

4. What do you hope to gain from this training?

Pretest/Posttest Survey for Law Enforcement

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not comfortable at all, and 5 being very comfortable, how comfortable are you around individuals with disabilities?

1 2 3 4 5

2. How comfortable do you feel you are able to identify when you are working with an individual who has a disability?

1 2 3 4 5

3. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not knowledgeable, and 5 being very knowledgeable, how knowledgeable are you in identifying symptoms that indicate different disabilities?

1 2 3 4 5

Find Your Pair Warm Up Activity Potential Theme Cards

Food Theme:

Salt	Pepper
Peanut Butter	Jelly
Cereal	Milk
Chips	Dip
Bread	Butter

Around the House Theme:

Lock	Key
Suit	Tie
Hammer	Nail
Shoes	Socks
Pencil	Paper

Session 2:
Team-Building and Role-Play Workshop

Session 2: Team-Building and Role-Play Workshop

Understanding Us organizes each session outline using Cole's Seven Steps for ease of implementation. The PEO model and the *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework* (OTPF) will be used to guide each session.

Group Description: This is a series of three, two-hour sessions, once a day for three days designed to improve interactions between individuals with disabilities and members of law enforcement. The number of participants will be dependent on the interest in the group and willingness to participate however, groups will not exceed 8 participants. This group will help participants increase their knowledge about one another, improve interactions, increase confidence in identifying one another, and foster positive experiences between the two populations.

Room Arrangement: The group will be held in a community space. The room will be set up in a circle formation so that all members are able to see the leader as well as the other group members. The papers and writing utensils that may be used for the warm-up, and main activity will be passed out to participants prior to the start of each activity. Supplemental handouts will be given to participants at the end of the session.

Required Items: Name tags, paper, writing utensils, cotton balls, straws, masking tape

Prior to this Session: Write names on name tags, print the role-play scenarios (found at end of session), and gather the necessary items for team-building activities

OTPF Areas of Occupation: Social Participation (community), and Education

1. Introduction:

Potential prompt for introduction:

"Welcome to the second of the three sessions of Understanding Us: An Interactive Training Program for Individuals with Disabilities and Members of Law Enforcement! Today's session is titled "Team-Building and Role-Play Workshop". We will start by completing a warm-up activity and will then move into our team-building and role-play activities."

Objectives:

1. By the end of this session, members of law enforcement will improve their ability to independently identify if someone has a disability.
2. By the end of the session, members of law enforcement will be able to independently identify how to initiate an interaction with an individual they have identified as having a disability.

3. By the end of the session, group participants with disabilities will independently identify one strategy they can use to promote positive interactions with law enforcement in their communities.

4. By the end of this session, group members with disabilities will be able to independently communicate to members of law enforcement that they have a disability and state their symptoms or characteristics.

“Any Questions?”

Expectations: The facilitator(s) will state to the group that the expectations of the session are for all group members to participate in the warm-up, the activity, and the sharing sections of the group session as they feel comfortable. All group members will be asked to be mindful of ideas and experiences shared and to respect one another as well as the facilitator(s).

Timeframe:

- Introduction of session: 5 minutes
- Warm-up activity: 10 minutes
- Activity:
 - Team building 30 minutes
- Break: 10 minutes
 - Role-Play 40 minutes
- Sharing/Processing/Generalizing: 20 mins
- Overview of next session: 5 minutes
 - Total time: 2 hours

Warm-up: Review of the previous session

Each participant will state one thing that stood out to them or that they enjoyed from the last session and one thing that they are looking forward to in this session. Paper and a writing utensil may be provided if needed for organization of ideas.

Possible prompt to start the warm-up activity: *“For today’s warm-up, each member will state something that stood out to them from the last session and one thing they are looking forward to in this session. You will have 5 minutes to think about what you would like to share, paper and writing utensils are available if you would like to write down your ideas. Once 5 minutes are up, each member will have time to share.”*

2. Activity:

Activity 1: Team-Building Relay!

Two relay activities will be provided for this session. It is up to the occupational therapy practitioner to modify and grade the activities to meet the needs of the group members. The two activities for this session are described below.

Shoe Hunt: All participants will be paired up with a member from the other population. Each member will be asked to take their shoes off and place them in a pile at one end of the room and will return to the other end of the room (starting point) with their partner. The facilitator(s) will scramble the shoes into a large pile. When prompted, the pairs will race to the pile of shoes, find their shoes, put them on (members of law enforcement may help their partner with the process as needed), and race back to the starting point. Tape may be used to mark the starting point and finish line.

Cotton Ball Races: All participants will be paired with a member from the other population. Each pair will be provided with a cotton ball and two straws. One member of the pair will blow into their straw to move their cotton ball from the starting point to the finish line, then the other partner will move it back to the starting point in the same fashion. Touching the cotton ball is not allowed. Groups may race each other side by side or individually while being timed. The group facilitator(s) may choose if the race takes place with the cotton ball on the floor or on a table, depending on the physical needs of the group members. Tape may be used to mark the starting point and finish line.

Potential prompt for introduction of team-building activity:

“Our first activities are team-building activities. These will allow you to work together as a team to reach a goal. Please remember that this activity may be difficult for some of your peers, and it is important that everyone is respectful, supportive, and patient with one another. Are there any questions before we begin?”

Activity 2: Role-Playing

All participants will be split into two groups, consisting of an even mix of members from both populations. Facilitator(s) will introduce the role-playing activity and note the importance of being respectful and patient with group members as this activity may be challenging or cause stress for some participants. This activity is designed to allow each group to practice interacting with one another in different contexts. They will be given scenario prompts to help facilitate opportunities to share unique characteristics about themselves and work through situations that may be challenging, scary, or stressful in the community. Scenarios will be given to groups, and facilitator(s) will ensure understanding and comprehension of the situation prior to the start of the role-playing activity. In order to create a simulated experience of both populations, each member will be expected to act out both roles. Within their small group, each group member will be paired with a member from the opposite population that they will complete the activity with while the remainder of their group observes. Each large group will simultaneously complete their scenarios but 1-2 may be asked to present for the entire group (can be up to facilitator’s discretion based on confidence and willingness of participants). The scenarios can be found at the end of this session.

Potential prompt for introduction of role-play activity:

“Our next activity is a role-play activity. This will allow you to practice interacting with one another and share things about yourself that are important to tell each other when

you interact in the community. Please remember that this activity may be difficult for some of your peers, and it is important that everyone is respectful, supportive, and patient with one another. Are there any questions before we begin?"

3. Sharing:

Possible sharing questions:

"What did you like about the two activities? What would you change about them? Which activity was your favorite?"

4. Processing:

Possible processing questions:

What was the most challenging or hardest part about the activities? How did it feel to work together as a team? What did you learn about the other group when you were role-playing?

5. Generalizing:

Facilitator(s) points out similarities and/or differences that were observed between the two populations during each activity. Ask the group if there is anything they noticed that was similar or different.

Facilitator(s) share with the group, *"Today we were able to work as a team with one another to accomplish a common goal while developing positive interactions with one another. We also participated in a role-playing activity that was designed to help us practice positive interactions with one another in a safe environment. Is there anything else you learned today?"*

6. Application:

Prompt:

"This group session provided you with the opportunity to work as a team and practice positive interactions. Hopefully the activities allowed for you all to further your understanding of one another and increase your confidence when interacting with one another. What we have learned today can help you when you encounter one another in the community."

7. Summary:

Facilitator(s) restate the objectives from the beginning of the session:

1. By the end of this session, members of law enforcement will improve their ability to independently identify if someone has a disability.
2. By the end of the session, members of law enforcement will be able to independently identify how to initiate an interaction with an individual they have identified as having a disability.
3. By the end of the session, group participants with disabilities will independently identify one strategy they can use to promote positive interactions with law enforcement in their communities.
4. By the end of this session, group members with disabilities will be able to independently communicate to members of law enforcement that they have a disability and state their symptoms or characteristics.

“Today we were able to work as a team and role-play to practice positive interactions. We hope that these two sessions have helped you increase your confidence in sharing about yourself and getting to know one another as we move into our third and final session where we will be reflecting on the experiences we have had so far, what we have learned, and how you feel the program has helped you improve your understanding of the other group. This session will be two hours in length and the groups will be meeting on their own. Thank you all for participating!”

Rationale

Activity Demand:

Meaning: This group session was chosen because it will provide both populations with the opportunity to work together to reach a common goal. Also, the activity will allow for each population to practice interactions with one another in a safe and neutral environment. Additionally, the role-play activity was selected for this session as interactive role-play activities between members of law enforcement and individuals with intellectual disabilities in a facilitated setting have been identified as a strategy that may help them to develop positive attitudes towards one another (Bailey, Barr, & Bunting, 2001).

Performance Skills/Client Factor: In this group, members of law enforcement will be able to improve their ability to independently identify if someone has a disability (objective 1) and identify how to initiate an interaction with an individual they have identified as having a disability (objective 2). Also, in this group, participants with disabilities will be able to identify one strategy they can use to promote positive interactions with law enforcement in their communities (objective 3) and communicate to members of law enforcement that they have a disability and state their symptoms or characteristics (objective 4). An understanding of objective 1 and objective 2 will be demonstrated through the completion of the role-play activity and discussion during the sharing and processing steps of the session. An understanding of objectives 3 and 4 will be demonstrated through discussion during the sharing and processing steps of the session.

Complexity/Sequencing/Timing: The activity chosen is appropriate for this group because it allows each participant to participate at their current level of functioning, and does not require a high level of physical movement or high cognitive demands. Participants will be asked to follow simple directions, and comprehend the information given to them to the best of their ability. These populations will have the ability to take turns and sequence the activity. It is anticipated that both populations have the ability to attend for the duration of the activity and will be given a break and additional time for processing or movement throughout the room if needed.

Role Play Scenarios

Note: Each member is expected to play each role

Scenario 1:

An individual with a cognitive disability is accused of starting a fight while attending a concert. A fight broke out in front of the individual and they were struck with a punch, which scared them and they began to throw punches back. At this time, all individuals are in a heightened state.

Based on the information you learned in session 1:

- How would/should you approach the situation as a law enforcement officer?
- What considerations do you need to keep in mind?
- As an individual with a disability, how would/should you interact with the law enforcement officer?

Scenario 2:

An individual with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is waiting for his bus outside of a local gas station demonstrating repetitive and unusual body movements and noises. The police are called to remove a person suspected to be on drugs.

Based on the information you learned in session 1:

- How would/should law enforcement approach the situation?
- What considerations do you need to keep in mind?
- As an individual with ASD, how could/should you interact with the law enforcement officer?

Session 3:

The Wrap Up

Session 3: The Wrap Up

Understanding Us organizes each session outline using Cole's Seven Steps for ease of implementation. The PEO model and the *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework* (OTPF) will be used to guide each session.

Group Description: This is a series of three, two-hour sessions, once a day for three days designed to improve interactions between individuals with disabilities and members of law enforcement. The number of participants will be dependent on the interest in the group and willingness to participate however, groups will not exceed 8 participants. This group will help participants increase their knowledge about one another, improve interactions, increase confidence in identifying one another, and foster positive experiences between the two populations.

Room Arrangement: The group will be held in a community space. The room will be set up in a circle formation so that all members are able to see the leader as well as the other group members. The papers and writing utensils that may be used for the warm-up, and main activity will be passed out to participants prior to the start of each activity. Supplemental handouts will be given to participants at the end of the session.

Required Items: "Participant Satisfaction Surveys", "Pretest/Posttest for Individuals with Disabilities", and "Pretest/Posttest for Law Enforcement", paper, candy or prizes or warm-up activity.

Prior to this Session: Print the surveys; "Pretest/Posttest for Individuals with Disabilities", "Pretest/Posttest for Law Enforcement", and "Participant Satisfaction Survey" (found at end of session). Fill out and print certificates of completion, facilitator(s) will create clues and hide items for Scavenger Hunt warm-up activity.

OTPF Areas of Occupation: Social Participation (community), and Education

1. Introduction:

Potential prompt for introduction:

"Welcome to the third and final session of Understanding Us: An Interactive Training Program for Individuals with Disabilities and Members of Law Enforcement! Today's session is titled 'The Wrap Up'. We will start by taking two surveys. These surveys will help us understand what you have learned from the program, what you enjoyed about the program, and what we can do to make the program better. You will be given 5 minutes to complete the surveys, if you have questions or need help, please let us know. Once the surveys are complete, we will begin a warm-up activity and move into our debriefing activities. Today we will complete the warm-up and surveys in the large group, but will split into two groups (individuals with disabilities and members of law enforcement) to complete the debriefing activity. This will allow each group to be completely honest and reduce fears while talking about their experiences in the program. Upon completion of the activity, all participants will come back together for a wrap up and will be presented with a certificate of completion."

Objectives:

1. By the end of the session, members of law enforcement will be able to identify one thing they learned about individuals with disabilities to teach their coworkers.
2. By the end of this session, individuals with disabilities will be able to identify one thing they learned about law enforcement officers to teach to their peers.
3. By the end of the last session, all participants will have completed the Understanding Us interactive training program and share 1-2 skills they learned to help strengthen their interactions with each other.

“Any Questions?”

Expectations: The facilitator(s) will state to the group that the expectations of the session are for all group members to participate in the warm-up, the activity, and the sharing sections of the group session as they feel comfortable. All group members will be asked to be mindful of ideas and experiences shared and to respect one another as well as the facilitator(s).

Timeframe:

- Introduction of session: 5 minutes
- Surveys: 5 minutes
- Warm-up activity: 20 minutes
- Activity:
 - Open debriefing discussion 60 minutes
- Sharing/Processing/Generalizing/Wrap-up: 30 minutes
 - Total time: 2 hours

Warm-up: Scavenger Hunt

Each participant will be asked to pair up with a member of the opposite population that they have not worked with yet. They will be provided with a list of “clues” that they will use to find a series of items around the room. The pairs will need to work together to use their clues to find their items. They will be given 20 minutes to search around the room for the items and will have to work together as a team to read the clues and find the items. Any items found are theirs to keep. Types of items used for this warm-up can be up to the facilitator’s discretion. Examples of items include candy, snack packs, small prizes, etc. The group facilitator(s) will create clues appropriate to the participants and specific to the facility the sessions take place in. Example items and clues will be provided at the end of this session.

Possible prompt to start the warm-up activity:

“For today’s warm-up, each member will pair up with someone they have not worked with from the other population. You will be working together with your partner to find items throughout the room. Each pair will be provided with a list of clues to serve as a

guide to help you on your search. You will have 20 minutes to look for your items around the room. All items you find are yours to keep. Work together with your partner and have fun!”

2. Activity: Debriefing Discussion

Participants will write down the most important thing(s) they learned from the previous sessions. Once all participants are finished writing, the floor will be opened for discussion and sharing of what was learned. Time will also be provided to ask any remaining questions that participants may have.

3. Sharing:

Possible sharing questions:

“What did you like about the training program? What would you change about Understanding Us? Which activity or session was your favorite?”

4. Processing:

Possible processing questions:

What was the most challenging or hardest part about the training program? How did it feel to work with this group of people? Have you learned any new skills?

5. Generalizing:

Facilitator(s) point out similarities and/or differences among experiences or thoughts shared between group members. Ask the group if there is anything else they noticed that was similar or different.

Facilitator(s) share with the group, *“Today we were able to discuss our thoughts and experiences that we have had throughout the Understanding Us program. Today’s activity allowed you to share your experiences and skills learned in a safe environment with your group. We hope this last session has helped you to reflect on your feelings and instill confidence and positivity regarding your ability to interact with individuals from the other population. Is there anything else you learned today?”*

6. Application:

Possible prompt:

“This group session provided you with the opportunity to discuss what you have learned and clarify any remaining questions. Hopefully this interactive training program allowed for you all to further your understanding of one another and increase your confidence when interacting with one another. What you have learned from Understanding Us can help you when you encounter one another in the community. What have you learned that you can teach to your peers/coworkers?”

7. Summary:

Facilitator(s) restate the objectives from the beginning of the session:

1. By the end of the session, members of law enforcement will be able to identify one thing they learned about individuals with disabilities to teach their coworkers.
2. By the end of this session, individuals with disabilities will be able to identify one thing they learned about law enforcement officers to teach to their peers.
3. By the end of the last session, all participants will have completed the Understanding Us interactive training program and share 1-2 skills they learned to help strengthen their interactions with each other.

“Today we were able to discuss your experiences and what you have learned from the Understanding Us training program. We hope that this program has helped you increase your confidence in sharing about yourself and interacting with one another in your community. Thank you all for participating!”

Following completion of the summary, the two groups will return to the main room and reunite to say goodbye to their peers and receive their certificate of program completion. Facilitator(s) will hand out a certificate to each participant and thank them for their participation. Certificates may be mailed to participants if they do not receive them at the end of the session. A sample certificate is included at the end of this session.

Optional: Facilitator(s) may offer to host a small celebration at the end of the program if appropriate for all participants.

Rationale

Activity Demand:

Meaning: This group session was chosen because it will provide both populations with the opportunity to reflect and discuss their experiences in a safe, structured environment. This session will also allow participants to carry over what they have learned in the previous two sessions. Additionally, according to Bailey, Barr, and Bunting (2001) awareness training exercises and discussions assist participants in recognizing their own attitudes and stigmas they place on others, and the impact that such views have on them.

Performance Skills/Client Factor: During this activity, all participants will be provided with an opportunity to identify what they have learned about the other population. They will also be asked if they feel they would be able to teach it to their coworkers/peers (objectives 1 & 2). An understanding of objective 1 and objective 2 will be demonstrated through the completion of the debriefing activity and during the sharing and processing steps of the session. Objective 3 will be demonstrated through discussion during the sharing and processing steps of the session, and completion of session 3.

Complexity/Sequencing/Timing: The activity chosen is appropriate for this group because it allows each participant to participate at their current level of functioning and does not require a high level of physical movement or high cognitive demands. Participants will be asked to share their thoughts and feelings, and comprehend the information shared with them to the best of their ability. These populations also have the ability to take turns and sequence the activity. It is anticipated that both populations have the ability to attend for the duration of the activity and will be given a break and additional time for processing or movement throughout the room if needed.

Pretest/Posttest Survey for Individuals with Disabilities

5. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not comfortable at all, and 5 being very comfortable, how comfortable do you feel around police officers?

1 2 3 4 5

6. How comfortable do you feel telling a police officer that you have a disability?

1 2 3 4 5

7. How much do you know about what members of law enforcement do? With 1 being nothing and 5 being a lot.

1 2 3 4 5

Pretest/Posttest Survey for Law Enforcement

4. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not comfortable at all, and 5 being very comfortable, how comfortable are you around individuals with disabilities?

1 2 3 4 5

5. How comfortable do you feel you are able to identify when you are working with an individual who has a disability?

1 2 3 4 5

6. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not knowledgeable, and 5 being very knowledgeable, how knowledgeable are you in identifying symptoms that indicate different disabilities?

1 2 3 4 5

Participant Satisfaction Survey

This survey is to see if you feel you have learned from this program as well as what you liked and/or disliked about this program. Please answer the questions truthfully with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

1. I have a better understanding of the other population. 1 2 3 4 5

2. I feel more comfortable interacting with the other population. 1 2 3 4 5

3. I felt the team building activities were helpful. 1 2 3 4 5

4. I felt the role play activities were helpful. 1 2 3 4 5

5. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all satisfied and 5 being very satisfied, how
satisfied are you with this program? 1 2 3 4 5

6. What suggestions do you have to make this program better?

7. What was your favorite part of this program?

Sample Scavenger Hunt

Item	Clue
Tape a candy bar under a chair.	This treat is found under something that you sit on to relax or to eat.
Hide a bouncy ball under a stool.	This prize is under something that helps you rise.

UNDERSTANDING US
CERTIFICATE
OF COMPLETION

THIS CERTIFICATE IS AWARDED TO

Participant's Name

*Has successfully completed all sessions of Understanding Us: An Interactive
Training Program for Individuals with Disabilities and Members of Law
Enforcement.*

01.01.2020

DATE

Name Surname

OT FACILITATOR

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CHAPTER FIVE

Summary

The literature findings illustrate a need for an effective training program for individuals with disabilities and members of law enforcement that addresses the issues of lack of knowledge, insufficient training, personal experiences, and barriers to communication between the two populations. *Understanding Us* addresses each of the identified problems through three interactive sessions. The developed product serves as a tool for occupational therapy practitioners and occupational therapy students to implement sessions that allow for interactions among the two populations using a variety of interventions to help foster positive experiences, increase confidence and knowledge, and bring members of the community together in a safe environment.

The most prominent strength of *Understanding Us* is that it is currently the only interactive training program developed through an occupational therapy lens by using the *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process 3rd Edition (OTPF)* and the Person, Environment, Occupation (PEO) Model to guide interventions for these two populations. Another strength of this program is that it is easily adaptable and gives the occupational therapy practitioner or occupational therapy students the freedom to use their skills in activity analysis and adaptation to meet the unique needs of the participants. Further, the program is developed to be implemented across three consecutive days: the short duration allows for immediate carryover of the program objectives to accommodate busy schedules and learning needs of participants. However, there are some identified limitations to this program. One limitation of this program is that it has not been piloted

and therefore the efficacy is not yet known. Additionally, the small group sizes pose a limitation as the program will require many implementations in order to reach the large population that would benefit from the training.

It is recommended that the program be piloted, and the implementers analyze the results of the surveys to make changes or adaptations where they are needed in order to improve the efficacy of each session and meet the objectives most effectively. Once it has been piloted and necessary changes have been made, it would be beneficial to implement in community programs across the United States to reach more individuals from these populations. An opportunity exists for further scholarly collaboration among occupational therapy students for further product development, research, and implementation.

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